

Washington, D.C.- Keeping in mind the impending transition to digital broadcast and the millions of Americans who still only have access to analog televisions, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) signed a letter to Speaker Pelosi last month requesting action which would ensure continued broadcasts for all by delaying the digital implementation. As a result, the Congressman voted in favor of the "DTV Delay Act" today. The bill, already passed by the Senate to postpone the planned February 17 transition to solely digital broadcasts until June 12, allows additional time for this multitude of TV viewers to obtain converter boxes. Although the bill did not receive the needed two-thirds majority in the House to pass when it first came to the floor under suspension of the rules last week, the House successfully passed it today.

"Many of my constituents still rely on analog broadcasts and have not received the \$40 government vouchers they need to make this conversion," said Congressman Sestak. "Earlier this year, it became readily apparent that there was not enough funding for the voucher program, and that a sizeable percentage of my constituents would have been left in the dark on February 17. As of mid-December of last year, more than 100,000 homes in the Philadelphia region still had no televisions capable of receiving digital signals,"

"Television broadcasts are not merely a means of conveying entertainment," Congressman Sestak continued, "but they provide vital information during emergencies as well as information such as weather and traffic reports which people rely on in going about their daily lives. It was therefore impossible for me to sit idly by and allow the transition to occur at this time. In fact, the issue has been one of my highest priorities since I returned to Washington last month. On January 15, I signed a letter to Speaker Pelosi requesting additional funding for the voucher program or a delay in the transition,"

In addition to insufficient funding for the coupon program, the transition was also plagued by general confusion. Surveys have indicated that more than three-quarters of those interested in obtaining converter boxes are not even aware of the program.

"During these dire economic times, the \$50 to \$80 cost of these converter boxes is simply unaffordable for many of my constituents," said the Congressman. "There have also been numerous reports of unscrupulous individuals selling sham converter equipment and even large retailers failing to correctly label television sets as analog-only, in violation of FCC regulations. I will work with my fellow lawmakers in the months ahead to ensure that we have properly prepared the American people for the transition."

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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